

QUESTION:

Steven asks, "We located an old trunk that is labeled House of Representatives on it. Did Members or staff ever use these in House History?"

RESPONSE:

Members and Senators did receive trunks for moving their personal papers from Washington D.C. to their district. On May 9, 1911, Mr. John C. Floyd, of Arkansas, from the Committee on Accounts, submitted a report from which the following is an excerpt taken from the Congressional Record that day 62nd Congress, 1st Session Report no. 25 to accompany H. Res. 128:

"The duty of distributing packing boxes for frankable matter remains that of the Clerk, and it will not impose a heavy duty on the force at his command to discharge it in such manner as the Clerk may direct. Heretofore these boxes have been distributed from the Clerk's document room. For the information of new Members we will state that an annual appropriation of \$3,000 is made as a part of the House contingent fund for packing boxes, intended for the shipment of bulky frankable matter. This custom has obtained, for many years, the item dating back to 1857, when "boxes for books" were provided for; in 1862 the term "packing boxes" was first and has since been employed. These boxes are secured by contract pursuant to the act of March 3, 1901 (Supp. R.S. vol. 2, p. 1530), and paid for out of the contingent fund upon vouchers approved by the Committee on Accounts. Each Member is entitled to 3 boxes- 1 large pine, 1 large redwood and 1 small pine. The latter is generally used for sending out bedding plants from the Botanic Garden to any given address, the box being labeled here and sent to the garden with a Member's frank. The large boxes are convenient for mailing documents and files of official correspondence to Member's homes at the end of a session."

With the increase in the membership of the House in 1913, the appropriation bill was increased to \$4,500 for such "boxes" for each member and that amount remained unchanged in subsequent appropriation bills. In 1922, the House limited this appropriation sufficient only to provide each Member with one "box", and since that time the quota was limited to one trunk per Member. This practice was ended by the House in 1977, following the Senate's decision to end their similar tradition in October of that year.